

Luke: 11:1–13

From Catena Aurea:

1. And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.
2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.
3. Give us day by day our daily bread.
4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now whereas He possesses every good in abundance, why does He pray, since He is full, and has altogether need of nothing? To this we answer, that it befits Him, according to the manner of His dispensation in the flesh, to follow human observances at the time convenient for them. For if He eats and drinks, He rightly was used to pray, that He might teach us not to be lukewarm in this duty, but to be the more diligent and earnest in our prayers.

TITUS BOSTRENSIS. (in Matt.) The disciples having seen a new way of life, desire a new form of prayer, since there were several prayers to be found in the Old Testament. Hence it follows, When he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, in order that we might not sin against God in asking for one thing instead of another, or by approaching God in prayer in a manner that we ought not.

ORIGEN. And that he might point out the kind of teaching, the disciple proceeds, as John also taught his disciples. Of whom in truth thou hast told us, that among them that are born of women there had arisen none greater than he. And because thou hast commanded us to seek things that are great and eternal, whence shall we arrive at the knowledge of these but from Thee, our God and Saviour?

GREGORY OF NYSSA. (Orat. Dom. Serm. 1.) He unfolds the teaching of prayer to His disciples, who wisely desire the knowledge of prayer, directing them how they ought to beseech God to hear them.

BASIL. (Const. Monast. cap. 1.) There are two kinds of prayer, one composed of praise with humiliation, the other of petitions, and more subdued. Whenever then you pray, do not first break forth into petition; but if you condemn your inclination, supplicate God as if of necessity forced thereto. And when you begin to pray, forget all visible and invisible creatures, but commence with the praise of Him who created all things. Hence it is added, And he says unto them, When you pray, say, Our Father.

THEOPHYLACT. But He says not, which art in heaven, as though He were confined to that place, but to raise the hearer up to heaven, and draw him away from earthly things.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. (Orat. Dom. Serm. 2.) See how great a preparation thou needest, to be able to say boldly to God, O Father, for if thou hast thy eyes fixed on worldly things, or courtest the praise of men, or art a slave to thy passions, and utterest this prayer, I seem to hear God saying, 'Whereas thou that art of a corrupt life callest the Author of the incorruptible thy Father, thou pollutest with thy defiled lips an incorruptible name. For He who commanded thee to call Him Father, gave thee not leave to utter lies. (et serm. 3.). But the highest of all good things is to glorify God's name in our lives. Hence He adds, Hallowed be thy name. For who is there so debased, as when He sees the pure life of those who believe, does not glorify the name invoked in such a life. He then who says in his prayer, Be thy name, which I call upon, hallowed in me, prays this, "May I through Thy concurring aid be made just, abstaining from all evil."

CHRYSOSTOM. For as when a man gazes upon the beauty of the heavens, he says, Glory be thee, O God; so likewise when He beholds a man's virtuous actions, seeing that the virtue of man glorifies God much more than the heavens.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Since among those to whom the faith has not yet come, the name of God is still despised. But when the rays of truth shall have shined upon them, they will confess the Holy of Holies. (Dan. 9:24.)

TITUS BOSTRENSIS. (ubi sup.) And because in the name of Jesus is the glory of God the Father, the name of the Father will be hallowed whenever Christ shall be known.

ORIGEN. Or, because the name of God is given by idolaters, and those who are in error, to idols and creatures, it has not as yet been so made holy, as to be separated from those things from which it ought to be. He teaches us therefore to pray that the name of God may be appropriated to the only true God; to whom alone belongs what follows, Thy kingdom come, to the end that may be put down all the rule, authority, and power, and kingdom of the world, together with sin which reigns in our mortal bodies.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. (ubi sup.) We beseech also to be delivered by the Lord from corruption, to be taken out of death. Or, according to some, Thy kingdom come, that is, May Thy Holy Spirit come upon us to purify us.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Or they who say this seem to wish to have the Saviour of all again illuminating the world. But He has commanded us to desire in prayer that truly awful time, in order that men might know that it behoves them to live not in sloth and backwardness, lest that time bring upon them the fiery punishment, but rather honestly and according to His will, that that time may weave crowns for them. Hence it follows, according to Matthew, a Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

CHRYSOSTOM. As if He says, Enable us, O Lord, to follow the heavenly life, that whatever Thou willest, we may will also.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. (Orat. Dom. serm. 4.) For since He says that the life of man after the resurrection will be like to that of Angels, it follows, that our life in this world should be so ordered with respect to that which we hope for hereafter, that living in the flesh we may not live according to the flesh. But hereby the true Physician of the souls destroys the nature of the disease, that those who have been seized with sickness, whereby they have departed from the Divine will, may forthwith be released from the disease by being joined to the Divine will. For the health of the soul is the due fulfilment of the will of God.

AUGUSTINE. (in Enchirid. c. 116.) It seems according to the Evangelist Matthew, that the Lord's prayer contains seven petitions, but Luke has comprehended it in five. Nor in truth does the one disagree from the other, but the latter has suggested by his brevity how those seven are to be understood. For the name of God is hallowed in the spirit, but the kingdom of God is about to come at the resurrection of the body. Luke then, shewing that the third petition is in a manner a repetition of the two former, wished to make it so understood by omitting it. He then added three others. And first, of daily bread, saying, Give us day by day our daily bread.

TITUS BOSTRENSIS. Or the bread of souls is the Divine power, bringing the everlasting life which is to come, as the bread which comes out of the earth preserves the temporal life. But by saying "daily," He signifies the Divine bread which comes and is to come, which we seek to be given to us daily, requiring a certain earnest and taste of it, seeing that the Spirit which dwells in us hath wrought a virtue surpassing all human virtues, as chastity, humility, and the rest.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now perhaps some think it unfit for saints to seek from God bodily goods, and for this reason assign to these words a spiritual sense. But granting that the chief concern of the saints should be to obtain spiritual gifts, still it becomes them to see that they seek without blame, according to our Lord's command, their common bread. For from the fact that He bids them ask for bread, that is daily food, it seems that He implies that they should possess nothing, but rather practise an honourable poverty. For it is not the part of those who have bread to seek it, but rather of those who are oppressed with want.

BASIL. (in Reg. brev. ad inter. 252.) As if He said, For thy daily bread, namely, that which serves for our daily wants, trust not to thyself, but fly to God for it, making known to Him the necessities of thy nature.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 23. in Matt.) We must then require of God the necessities of life; not varieties of meats, and spiced wines, and the other things which please the palate, while they load thy stomach and disturb thy mind, but bread which is able to support the bodily substance, that is to say, which is sufficient only for the day, that we may take no thought of the morrow. But we make only one petition about things of sense, that the present life may not trouble us.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. (Orat. Dom. Serm. 5.) Having taught us to take confidence through good works, He next teaches us to implore the remission of our offences, for it follows, And forgive us our sins.

TITUS BOSTRENSIS. (in Matt.) This also was necessarily added, for no one is found without sin, that we should not be hindered from the holy participation on account of man's guilt. For whereas we are bound to render unto Christ all manner of holiness, who maketh His Spirit to dwell in us, we are to be blamed if we keep not our temples clean for Him. But this defect is supplied by the goodness of God, remitting to human frailty the severe punishment of sin. And this act is done justly by the just God, when we forgive as it were our debtors, those, namely, who have injured us, and have not restored what was due. Hence it follows, For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For He wishes, if I may so speak, to make God the imitator of the patience which men practise, that the kindness which they have shewn to their fellow-servants, they should in like manner seek to receive in equal balance from God, who recompenses to each man justly, and knows how to have mercy upon all men.

CHRYSOSTOM. Considering then these things, we ought to shew mercy to our debtors. For they are to us if we are wise the cause of our greatest pardon; and though we perform only a few things, we shall find

many. For we owe many and great debts to the Lord, of which if the least part should be exacted from us, we should soon perish.

TITUS BOSTRENSIS. (ubi sup.) For it is imposible not to be tempted by the devil, but we make this prayer that we may not be abandoned to our temptations. Now that which happens by Divine permission, God is sometimes in Scripture said to do. And in this way by hindering not the increase of temptation which is above our strength, he leads us into temptation.

MAXIMUS. (in Orat. Dom.) Or, the Lord commands us to pray, Lead us not into temptation, let us not have experience of lustful and self-induced temptations. But James teaches those who contend only for the truth, not to be unnerved by involuntary and troublesome temptations, saying, My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. (James 1:2.)

BASIL. (in reg. brev. ad inter. 221.) It does not however become us to seek by our prayers bodily afflictions. For Christ has universally commanded men every where to pray that they enter not into temptation. But when one has already entered, it is fitting to ask from the Lord the power of enduring, that we may have fulfilled in us those words, He that endureth to the end shall be saved. (Mat. 10:22.)

AUGUSTINE. (in Enchirid. c. 116.) But what Matthew has placed at the end, But deliver us from evil, Luke has not mentioned, that we might understand it belongs to the former, which was spoken of temptation. He therefore says, But deliver us, not, “And deliverus,” clearly proving this to be but one petition,” Do not this, but this.” But let every one know that he is therein delivered from evil, when he is not brought into temptation.

11:5–8

5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. The Saviour had before taught, in answer to the request of His apostles, how men ought to pray. But it might happen that those who had received this wholesome teaching, poured forth their prayers indeed according to the form given to them, but carelessly and languidly, and then when they were not heard in the first or second prayer, left off praying. That this then might not be our case, He shews by means of a parable, that cowardice in our prayers is hurtful, but it is of great advantage to have patience in them. Hence it is said, And he says unto them, Which of you shall have a friend.

THEOPHYLACT. God is that friend, who loveth all men, and wills that all should be saved.

AMBROSE. Who is a greater friend to us, than He who delivered up His body for us? Now we have here another kind of command given us, that at all times, not only in the day, but at night, prayers should be offered up. For it follows, And shall go into him at midnight. (Ps. 119:62.) As David did when he said, At midnight I will rise and give thanks unto thee. For he had no fear of awakening them from sleep, whom he knew to be ever watching. For if David who was occupied also in the necessary affairs of a kingdom was so holy, that seven times in the day he gave praise to God, (Ps. 119:164.) what ought we to do, who ought so much the more to pray, as we more frequently sin, through the weakness of our mind and body? But if thou lovest the Lord thy God, thou wilt be able to gain favour, not only for thyself, but others. For it follows, And say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, &c.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 105) But what are these three loaves but the food of the heavenly mystery? For it may be that one has had a friend asking for what he cannot supply him with, and then finds that he has not what he is compelled to give. A friend then comes to you on his journey, that is, in this present life, in which all are travelling on as strangers, and no one remains possessor, but to every man is told, Pass on, O stranger, give place to him that is coming. (Ecclus 29, 27.) Or perhaps some friend or yours comes from a bad road, (that is, an evil life,) wearied and not finding the truth, by hearing and receiving which he may become happy. He comes to thee as to a Christian, and says, "Give me a reason," asking perhaps what you from the simplicity of your faith are ignorant of, and not having wherewith to satisfy his hunger, are compelled to seek it in the Lord's books. For perhaps what he asked is contained in the book, but obscure. You are not permitted to ask Paul himself, or Peter, or any prophet, for all that family is now resting with their Lord, and the ignorance of the world is very great, that is, it is midnight, and your friend who is urgent from hunger presses this, not contented with a simple faith; must he then be abandoned? Go therefore to the Lord Himself with whom the family is sleeping, Knock, and pray; of whom it is added, And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not. He delays to give, wishing that you should the more earnestly desire what is delayed, lost by being given at once it should grow common.

BASIL. (Const. Mon. c. 1.) For perhaps He delays purposely, to redouble your earnestness and coming to him, and that you may know what the gift of God is, and may anxiously guard what is given. For whatever a man acquires with much pains he strives to keep safe, lest with the loss of that he should lose his labour likewise.

GLOSS. (ordin.) He does not then take away the liberty of asking, but is the more anxious to kindle the desire of praying, by shewing the difficulty of obtaining that we ask for. For it follows, The door is now shut.

AMBROSE. This is the door which Paul also requests may be opened to him, beseeching to be assisted not only by his own prayers, but those also of the people, that a door of utterance may be opened to him to speak the mystery of Christ. (Col. 4:3.) And perhaps that is the door which John saw open, and it was said to him, Come up hither, and, I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. (Rev. 4:1.)

AUGUSTINE. (Qu. Ev. l. ii. qu. 21.) The time then referred to is that of the famine of the word, when the understanding is shut up, (Amos 8:11.) and they who dealing out the wisdom of the Gospel as it were bread, preached throughout the world, are now in their secret rest with the Lord. And this it is which is added, And my children are with me in bed.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. Well does he call those children who by the arms of righteousness have claimed to themselves freedom from passion, shewing that the good which by practice we have acquired, had been from the beginning laid up in our nature. For when any one renouncing the flesh, by living in the exercise of a virtuous life, has overcome passion, then he becomes as a child, and is insensible to the passions. But by the bed we understand the rest of Christ.

GLOSS. (ordin.) And because of what has gone before he adds, I cannot rise and give thee, which must have reference to the difficulty of obtaining.

AUGUSTINE. (de Quæst. Ev. lib. ii. qu. 21.) Or else, the friend to whom the visit is made at midnight, for the loan of the three loaves, is evidently meant for an allegory, just as a person set in the midst of trouble might ask God that He would give him to understand the Trinity, by which he may console the troubles of this present life. For his distress is the midnight in which he is compelled to be so urgent in his request for the three. Now by the three loaves it is signified, that the Trinity is of one substance. But the friend coming from his journey is understood the desire of man, which ought to obey reason, but was obedient to the custom of the world, which he calls the way, from all things passing along it. Now when man is converted

to God, that desire also is reclaimed from custom. But if not consoled by that inward joy arising from the spiritual doctrine which declares the Trinity of the Creator, he is in great straits who is pressed down by earthly sorrows, seeing that from all outward delights he is commanded to abstain, and within there is no refreshment from the delight of spiritual doctrine. And yet it is effected by prayer, that he who desires should receive understanding from God, even though there be no one by whom wisdom should be preached. For it follows, And if that man shall continue, &c. The argument is drawn from the less to the greater. For, if a friend rises from his bed, and gives not from the force of friendship, but from weariness, how much more does God give who without weariness gives most abundantly whatever we ask?

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) But when thou shalt have obtained the three loaves, that is, the food and knowledge of the Trinity, thou hast both the source of life and of food. Fear not. Cease not. For that bread will not come to an end, but will put an end to your want. Learn and teach. Live and eat.

THEOPHYLACT. Or else, The midnight is the end of life, at which many come to God. But the friend is the Angel who receives the soul. Or, the midnight is the depth of temptations, in which he who has fallen, seeks from God three loaves, the relief of the wants of his body, soul, and spirit; through whom we run into no danger in our temptations. But the friend who comes from his journey is God Himself, who proves by temptations who has nothing to set before Him, and who is weakened in temptation. But when He says, And the door is shut, we must understand that we ought to be prepared before temptations. But after that we have fallen into them, the gate of preparation is shut, and being found unprepared, unless God keep us, we are in danger.

11:9–13

9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) Having laid aside the metaphor, our Lord added an exhortation, and expressly urged us to ask, seek, and knock, until we receive what we are seeking. Hence he says, And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. The words, I say unto you, have the force of an oath. For God doth not lie, but whenever He makes known any thing to His hearers with an oath, he manifests the inexcusable littleness of our faith.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 23. in Matt.) Now by asking, He means prayer, but by seeking, zeal and anxiety, as He adds, Seek, and ye shall find. For those things which are sought require great care. And this is particularly the case with God. For there are many things which block up our senses. As then we search for lost gold, so let us anxiously seek after God. He shews also, that though He does not forthwith open the gates, we must yet wait. Hence he adds, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for if you continue seeking, you shall surely receive. For this reason, and as the door shut makes you knock, therefore he did not at once consent that you might entreat.

GREEK EXPOSITOR. (**Severus Antioch.**) Or by the word knock perhaps he means seeking effectually, for one knocks with the hand, but the hand is the sign of a good work. Or these three may be distinguished in another way. For it is the beginning of virtue to ask to know the way of truth. But the second step is to seek how we must go by that way. The third step is when a man has reached the virtue to knock at the door, that he may enter upon the wide field of knowledge. All these things a man acquires by prayer. Or to ask indeed is to pray, but to seek is by good works to do things becoming our prayers. And to knock is to continue in prayer without ceasing.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 105.) But He would not so encourage us to ask were He not willing to give. Let human slothfulness blush, He is more willing to give than we to receive.

AMBROSE. Now he who promises any thing ought to convey a hope of the thing promised, that obedience may follow commands, faith, promises. And therefore he adds, For every one that asketh receiveth.

ORIGEN. But some one may seek to know, how it comes that they who pray are not heard? To which we must answer, that whose sets about seeking in the right way, omitting none of those things which avail to the obtaining of our requests, shall really receive what he has prayed to be given him. But if a man turns

away from the object of a right petition, and asks not as it becomes him, he does not ask. And therefore it is, that when he does not receive, as is here promised, there is no falsehood. For so also when a master says, "Whoever will come to me, he shall receive the gift of instruction;" we understand it to imply a person going in real earnest to a master, that he may zealously and diligently devote himself to his teaching. Hence too James says, Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, (James 4:3.) namely, for the sake of vain pleasures. But some one will say, Nay, when men ask to obtain divine knowledge, and to recover their virtue they do not obtain? To which we must answer, that they sought not to receive the good things for themselves, but that thereby they might reap praise.

BASIL. (in Const. c. 1.) If also any one from indolence surrenders himself to his desires, and betrays himself into the hands of his enemies, God neither assists him nor hears him, because by sin he has alienated himself from God. It becomes then a man to offer whatever belongs to him, but to cry to God to assist him. Now we must ask for the Divine assistance not slackly, nor with a mind wavering to and fro, because such a one will not only not obtain what it seeks, but will the rather provoke God to anger. For if a man standing before a prince has his eye fixed within and without, lest perchance he should be punished, how much more before God ought he to stand watchful and trembling? But if when awakened by sin you are unable to pray stedfastly to the utmost of your power, check yourself, that when you stand before God you may direct your mind to Him. And God pardons you, because not from indifference, but infirmity, you cannot appear in His presence as you ought. If then you thus command yourself, do not depart until you receive. For whenever you ask and receive not, it is because your request was improperly made, either without faith, or lightly, or for things which are not good for you, or because you left off praying. But some frequently make the objection, "Why pray we? Is God then ignorant of what we have need?" He knows undoubtedly, and gives us richly all temporal things even before we ask. But we must first desire good works, and the kingdom of heaven; and then having desired, ask in faith and patience, bringing into our prayers whatever is good for us, convicted of no offence by our own conscience.

AMBROSE. The argument then persuading to frequent prayer, is the hope of obtaining what we pray for. The ground of persuasion was first in the command, afterwards it is contained in that example which He sets forth, adding, If a son shall ask bread of any of you, will he give him a stone? &c.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. In these words our Saviour gives us a very necessary piece of instruction. For often-times we rashly, from the impulse of pleasure, give way to hurtful desires. When we ask any such thing from God, we shall not obtain it. To shew this, He brings an obvious example from those things which are before our eyes, in our daily experience. For when thy son asks of thee bread, thou givest it him

gladly, because he seeks a wholesome food. But when from want of understanding he asks for a stone to eat, thou givest it him not, but rather hinderest him from satisfying his hurtful desire. So that the sense may be, But which of you asking his father for bread, (which the father gives,) will he give him a stone? (that is, if he asked it.) There is the same argument also in the serpent and the fish; of which he adds, Or if he asks a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? And in like manner in the egg and scorpion, of which he adds, Or if he ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

ORIGEN. Consider then this, if the bread be not indeed the food of the soul in knowledge, without which it can not be saved, as, for example, the well planned rule of a just life. But the fish is the love of instruction, as to know the constitution of the world, and the effects of the elements, and whatever else besides wisdom treats of. Therefore God does not in the place of bread offer a stone, which the devil wished Christ to eat, nor in the place of a fish does He give a serpent, which the Ethiopians eat who are unworthy to eat fishes. Nor generally in the place of what is nourishing does he give what is not eatable and injurious, which relates to the scorpion and egg.

AUGUSTINE. (de Quæst. Ev. lib. ii. qu. 22.) Or by the bread is meant charity, because we have a greater desire of it, and it is so necessary, that without it all other things are nothing, as the table without bread is mean. Opposed to which is hardness of heart, which he compared to a stone. But by the fish is signified the belief in invisible things, either from the waters of baptism, or because it is taken out of invisible places which the eye cannot reach. Because also faith, though tossed about by the waves of this world, is not destroyed, it is rightly compared to a fish, in opposition to which he has placed the serpent on account of the poison of deceit, which by evil persuasion had its first seed in the first man. Or, by the egg is understood hope. For the egg is the young not yet formed, but hoped for through cherishing, opposed to which he has placed the scorpion, whose poisoned sting is to be dreaded behind; as the contrary to hope is to look back, since the hope of the future reaches forward to those things which are before.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 105.) What great things the world speaks to thee, and roars them behind thy back to make thee look behind! O unclean world, why clamourest thou! Why attempt to turn him away! Thou wouldest detain him when thou art perishing, what wouldest thou if thou wert abiding for ever? Whom wouldest thou not deceive with sweetness, when bitter thou canst infuse false food?

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now from the example just given he concludes, If then ye being evil, (i. e. having a mind capable of wickedness, and not uniform and settled in good, as God,) know how to give good gifts; how much more shall your heavenly Father?

ATHANASIUS. (Dial. 1. de Trin.) Now unless the Holy Spirit were of the substance of God, Who alone is good, He would by no means be called good, since our Lord refused to be called good, inasmuch as He was made man.

AUGUSTINE. (Serm. 105.) Therefore, O covetous man, what seekest thou? or if thou seekest any thing else, what will suffice thee to whom the Lord is not sufficient?

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

11:1–4 Petitioning the Father

Jesus' Disciple Wants to Know How Jesus Petitions the Father.

Origen: I think that one of Jesus' disciples was conscious in himself of human weakness, which falls short of knowing how we ought to pray.... Are we then to conclude that a man who was brought up in the instruction of the law, who heard the words of the prophets and did not fail to attend the synagogue, did not know how to pray until he saw the Lord praying "in a certain place"? It would certainly be foolish to say this. The disciple prayed according to the customs of the Jews, but he saw that he needed better knowledge about the subject of prayer. On Prayer 2.4.

The Privilege and Responsibility of Calling God Father.

Cyril of Alexandria: For the Savior said, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father.'" And another of the holy Evangelists adds, "who art in heaven." ...

He gives his own glory to us. He raises slaves to the dignity of freedom. He crowns the human condition with such honor as surpasses the power of nature. He brings to pass what was spoken of old by the voice of the psalmist: "I said, you are gods, and all of you children of the Most High." He rescues us from the measure of slavery, giving us by his grace what we did not possess by nature, and permits us to call God "Father," as being admitted to the rank of sons. We received this, together with all our other privileges, from him. One of these privileges is the dignity of freedom, a gift peculiarly befitting those who have been called to be sons.

He commands us, therefore, to take boldness and say in our prayers, "Our Father." We, who are children of earth and slaves and subject by the law of nature to him who created us, call him who is in heaven "Father." Most fittingly, he enables those who pray to understand this also. Since we call God "Father" and have been counted worthy of such a distinguished honor, we must lead holy and thoroughly blameless lives. We must behave as is pleasing to our Father and not think or say anything unworthy or unfit for the freedom that has been bestowed on us....

The Savior of all very wisely grants us to call God "Father," that we, knowing well that we are sons of God, may behave in a manner worthy of him who has honored us. He will then receive the supplications that we offer in Christ. Commentary on Luke, Homily 71.

Prayers to the Father are Always through the Son.

Origen: Perhaps we should ... pray ... only to the God and Father of all, to whom even our Savior himself prayed, as we have explained, and to whom he taught us to pray. When he heard "teach us to pray," he did not teach us to pray to himself but to the Father by saying "Our Father in heaven and so forth." ...

When the saints give thanks to God in their prayers, they acknowledge through Christ Jesus the favors he has done. If it is true that one who is scrupulous about prayer should not pray to someone else who prays but rather to the Father whom our Lord Jesus taught us to address in prayers, it is especially true that no prayer should be addressed to the Father without him. On Prayer 15.1–2.

We Pray that God's Name May Be Hallowed Among Us.

Cyril of Alexandria: What, therefore, is the meaning of "hallowed be your name"?...

When it is our settled conviction and belief that he who by nature is God over all is Holy of the Holies, we confess his glory and supreme majesty. We then receive his fear into our mind and lead upright and blameless lives. By this we become holy ourselves, and we may be able to be near unto the holy God.... The prayer is, therefore, "May your name be kept holy in us, in our minds and wills." This is the significance of the word hallowed. If a person says, "Our Father, hallowed be your name," he is not requesting any addition to be made to God's holiness. He rather asks that he may possess such a mind and faith to feel that his name is honorable and holy. The act is the source of life and the cause of every blessing. How

must being this influenced by God be worthy of the highest estimation and useful for the salvation of the soul? Commentary on Luke, Homily 72.

Only the Saints May Pray “Your Kingdom Come”.

Cyril of Alexandria: God is our King before the worlds. Since God always reigns and is omnipotent, with what view do those who call God “Father” offer up to him their requests and say, “Your kingdom come”?

They seem to desire to behold Christ the Savior of all rising again upon the world. He will come. He will come and descend as judge, no longer in a lowly condition like us or in the humility of human nature. He will come in glory such as becomes God, as he dwells in the unapproachable light, and with the angels as his guards. He somewhere said, “The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.”

...

That judgment seat is terrifying. The Judge is unbiased. It is a time of pleading, or rather of trial and of retribution. The fire, enduring punishment and eternal torments are prepared for the wicked. How can men pray to behold that time?... The wicked and impure lead low and lewd lives and are guilty of every vice. In no way is it fitting for them in their prayers to say, “your kingdom come.” ...

The saints ask that the time of the Savior’s perfect reign may come, because they have labored dutifully, have a pure conscience and look for the reward of what they have already done. Just as those who, expecting a festival and merriment about ready to come and shortly to appear, thirst for its arrival, so also do they. They trust that they will stand glorious in the presence of the Judge and hear him say, “Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.” ... They fully believed what he said about the consummation of the world.

When he will appear to them again from heaven, they will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They correctly say in their prayers, “your kingdom come.” For they feel confident that they will receive a reward for their bravery and attain to the consummation of the hope set before them. Commentary on Luke, Homily 73.

To Do the Will of God.

Cyril of Alexandria: Why then did he command the saints to say to God the Father in heaven, "Your will be done; as in heaven, so on earth?" ... This petition is worthy of the saints and full of all praise....

We request that power may be given to those on earth to do the will of God and imitate the conduct practiced above in heaven by the holy angels....

The saints request that both Israel as well as the Gentiles may be counted worthy of peace from on high and be comforted since they were in misery and caught in the net of sin without possibility of escape. Having received the righteousness that is in Christ by faith, they may become pure and skillful in every good work. They pray, "Your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth for this reason." As I said, the will of God over all is that those on earth should live in holiness, piously, without blame, being washed from all impurity, and diligent in imitating the spiritual beauty of the spirits above in heaven. The church on earth, since it was the visible likeness and image of the church of the firstborn that is above, may please Christ. Commentary on Luke, Homily 74.

To Pray for the Kingdom.

Augustine: "Your kingdom come." To whom do we address this petition? Will the kingdom of God not come unless we ask for it? That kingdom will exist after the end of the world. God has a kingdom forever. He is never without a kingdom, for all creation is subject to him. Then for what kingdom do we wish? It is written in the Gospel, "Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." See, that is the kingdom of which we speak when we say, "Thy kingdom come." May that kingdom come within us and may we be found within that kingdom. That is our petition. Of course it will come. How will that benefit you if it finds you at the left hand? In this petition, you also wish a blessing on yourself. It is on your own behalf that you pray. In this petition, this is what you desire and long for, namely, that you may so live as to have a share in the kingdom that will be given to all the saints. When you say, "Thy kingdom come," you pray for yourself, because you pray that you may lead a good life. May we partake of your kingdom. May the kingdom that is to come to your saints and your righteous ones also come to us. Sermon 56.6.

The Bread of the Day is the Bread of Necessity.

Ephrem the Syrian: "Give us our constant bread of the day." Look, he has said, "Seek the kingdom of God, and these things over and above will be given to you as well." He said "of the day" to teach us poverty in relation to the things of the world. It is sufficient for only our need, or else when we are anxious for a time, we might withdraw from intimacy with God. This bread of the day indicates necessity. He does not just give us only bread but also clothing and other things, as he said, "Your Father knows what your needs are before you ask him." Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 6.16a.

Daily Bread is Spiritual and Physical. John Cassian: "Give us this day our supersubstantial bread." Another Evangelist uses the term daily.

The first expression indicates that this bread has a noble and substantial character by which its exalted splendor and holiness surpass all substances and all creatures.

With "daily" the Evangelist shows that without this bread we cannot live a spiritual life for even a day. When he says "this day," he shows that the bread must be eaten each day. It will not be enough to have eaten yesterday unless we eat similarly today. May our daily poverty encourage us to pour out this prayer at all times, for there is no day on which it is unnecessary for us to eat this bread to strengthen the heart of the person within us.

"Daily" can also be understood as referring to our present life. That is, "give us this bread while we linger in this present world." We know that in the time to come you will give it to whoever deserves it, but we ask that you give it to us today. He who has not received it in this life will not be able to partake of it in that next life. Conference 9.21.

To Forgive Sins is to Imitate God.

Cyril of Alexandria: He requires his disciples to be gentle and slow to anger, so that they may be able to say blamelessly in their prayers, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted unto us." ... He first commands them to ask forgiveness of the sins they commit and then to confess that they entirely forgive others. If I may say so, they ask God to imitate the patience that they practice. The same gentleness that they show to their fellow servants, they pray that they may receive in equal measure from God, who gives justly, and knows how to show mercy to everyone....

The Savior of all and Lord with good reason did not conclude this clause of the prayer at this point but commanded us to add, "For we also ourselves have forgiven every one who is indebted to us." This is fitting to say only for those who have chosen a virtuous life and are practicing without carelessness "the will of God" that, as Scripture says, "is good and acceptable and perfect." ...

We must ask God for the forgiveness of the sins that we have committed. First, we must have forgiven whoever has offended us in anything. This is if their sin is against us and not against the glory of the supreme God. We are not masters over such actions but only over those that have been committed against ourselves. By forgiving the brothers what they do to us, we will then certainly find Christ, the Savior of all, gentle and ready to show us mercy. Commentary on Luke, Homily 76.

To Forgive Sins is to Serve God.

Origen: Luke says, "Forgive us our sins," since sins are associated with our debts if we have not paid them. He says the same thing as Matthew but does not seem to leave room for the person who wishes to forgive debtors only if they repent. He says that our Savior has given the law that we should add to our prayer, "For we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us." Surely we all have authority to forgive sins against ourselves. This is clear from "as we forgive our debtors" and from "for we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us." The person inspired by Jesus and known by his fruits, as the apostles were, has received the Holy Spirit. He has become spiritual by being led by the Spirit to do everything by reason as a child of God. This person forgives whatever God forgives and retains sins that cannot be healed, serving God as the prophets by not speaking his own words but those of the divine will. He also serves God who alone has authority to forgive. On Prayer 28.7–8.

Being Delivered from Evil.

Cyril of Alexandria: When we are intent in prayer, he commands us to say, "Lead us not into temptation." Luke concludes the prayer with these words, but Matthew adds, "but deliver us from the evil one." There is a certain close connection in the clauses, because when people are not being led into temptation, they are also delivered from the evil one. If anyone were perhaps to say that not being led into is the same as being delivered from it, he would not err from the truth. Commentary on Luke, Homily 77.

11:5–8 The Friend at Midnight: How the Father Answers Our Petitions

God Gives Graciously.

Augustine: A man whose friend came to him from a journey had nothing to set before him. He wished to borrow three loaves from a friend. Perhaps this number symbolizes the Trinity of one substance. The man woke him as he slept in the middle of his servants. He begged insistently and importunately, so that he gave him as many as he wished. If a man awakened from sleep is forced to give unwillingly in answer to a request, God, who does not know sleep and who wakens us from sleep that we may ask, gives much more graciously. Letter 130.

The Nourishment of the Heavenly Mystery.

Ambrose: You see that he who woke his friend at midnight demanding three loaves of bread and, persisting in his intention to receive, finds that his requests are not denied. What are those three loaves if not the nourishment of the heavenly mystery? If you love the Lord your God, you will be able to deserve this not only for yourself but also for others. Then who is a greater friend to us than he who surrendered his own body for us? Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 7.87.

11:9–13 Ask, Seek, Knock: How the Father Gives His Spirit

The Bestower of Divine Gifts.

Cyril of Alexandria: The Bestower of divine gifts enters himself and speaks: "I also say to you, 'Seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you; for every one that asks receives; and he who seeks finds: and whosoever knocks, it shall be opened to him.'" These words have the full force of an oath, not that God is false, although the promise is not accompanied with an oath. To show that the smallness of their faith was groundless, he sometimes confirms his hearers by an oath. The Savior is also found in many places prefacing his words by saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you." He makes this very promise on oath. You will not be free from guilt if you disbelieve it. Commentary on Luke, Homily 78.

Faith, Hope and Charity Symbolized by the Fish, Egg and Bread.

Augustine: Of those three things that the apostle commends, faith is either signified by the fish, because of the water of baptism, or because it remains unharmed by the waves of this world. The Serpent is

opposed to it, because it craftily and deceitfully persuaded man not to believe in God. The egg symbolizes hope, because the chick is not yet alive but will be; it is not yet seen but is hoped. "Hope that is seen is not hope." The scorpion is opposed to hope, because whoever hopes for eternal life forgets the things that are behind and reaches out to those that are before. It is dangerous for him to look backward, and he is on guard against the rear of the scorpion, which has a poisoned dart in its tail. Bread symbolizes love, because "the greatest of these is love," and among foods, bread certainly surpasses all others in value. The stone is opposed to it because the stonehearted cast out love. It may be that these gifts signify something more appropriate, yet he who knows how to give good gifts to his children urges us to ask, seek and knock. Letter 130.

Sonship in Jesus.

Origen: He who believes that the mouth of Jesus cannot lie would hesitate a moment to be persuaded to pray, when he says, "Ask, and it will be given you ... for everyone who asks, receives." When we ask for the living bread, the good Father certainly gives him (and not the stone that his adversary wishes to give to Jesus and his disciples for food) to those who have received the Spirit of sonship from the Father. The Father gives a good gift, raining it down from heaven for those who ask him. On Prayer 10.2.

What to Pray for, and What Not to Pray for.

Cyril of Alexandria: We sometimes come near to our bounteous God offering him petitions for various objects according to each one's pleasure. Sometimes we pray without discernment or any careful examination of what truly is to our advantage, and if granted by God would prove a blessing or would be to our injury if we received it. Rather, by the inconsiderate impulse of our fancy, we fall into desires full of ruin that thrust the souls of those that entertain them into the snare of death and the meshes of hell. When we ask of God anything of this kind, we will by no means receive it. On the contrary, we offer a petition suitable only for ridicule. Why will we not receive it? Is the God of all weary of bestowing gifts on us? By no means. "Why then," someone may say, "will he not give, since he is bounteous in giving?" ...

When he says, "You who are evil," he means "you whose mind is capable of being influenced by evil and not uniformly inclined to good like the God of all." "You know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give a good spirit to them that ask him?" By a "good spirit" he means "spiritual grace." This is good in every way. If a person receives it, he will become most blessed and worthy of admiration. Commentary on Luke, Homily 79.